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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Rolling safely on skateboards, scooters, caster boards

As the popularity of wheeled boards such as skateboards, non-powered scooters and two-wheeled caster boards increases, so does the risk of injury.

Wheeled recreational vehicles help improve large motor skills, balance and coordination, but riders should follow safety precautions to reduce their chances of injury.

An estimated 50,000 skateboard-related injuries and approximately 8,000 scooter-related injuries occurred in children in 2000, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Most common injuries were fractures. Some injuries were related to falls and a lack of safety equipment. Injuries and even deaths have resulted from collisions with motor vehicles.

Also increasing in popularity are caster boards (brand names include RipStik and FreeRider, among others), which resemble two-wheeled skateboards that have separate, moving platforms for each foot. Data are not available for injuries caused by caster boards. Safety videos with instructions on how to ride caster boards are posted on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=cINdfz4KDMU.



The AAP and Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urge riders of wheeled boards to exercise caution and offer the following safety tips:

- Wear sturdy shoes, a helmet that complies with CPSC or Snell Memorial Foundation standards, knee pads, wrist guards and elbow pads. Wrist guards may make it difficult to grip the handle and steer the scooter.
 - Children under age 8 should not ride non-powered scooters or caster boards. Children under age 5 should not use skateboards. Children ages 5-10 should ride skateboards only with close adult supervision.
 - Avoid gravel and uneven pavement, which can cause falls.
 - Do not ride on streets, in traffic or at night.
 - "Skitching a ride," or holding onto the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding, should never be done.
- Skateboard, scooter and caster board riders also should check local laws regarding where the vehicles can be ridden. While not a complete guarantee of children's safety, skate parks are available in some communities as an alternative to riding on backyard ramps or in streets and parking lots.

— Trisha Koriath

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